



# ADR Review

## AN ADRO NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL ISSUE

## PREPARING TO RETURN TO THE OFFICE

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The Alternative Dispute Resolution Office (ADRO or ADR Office), located in the Office of Hearings and Appeals at DOE HQ in Washington D.C., serves as a resource to all DOE employees and contractors nationwide. ADRO works to explore efficient and cost-effective means of managing conflicts and resolving disputes without resorting to the formalities and costs of litigation. ADRO's mission is to promote the use of conflict management and alternative dispute resolution techniques at all levels. To that end, ADRO provides an array of ADR services, including mediation, facilitation, training, and other offerings. Please contact us at [ADROffice@hq.doe.gov](mailto:ADROffice@hq.doe.gov) or (202) 586-4002 if we can be of service.

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After so many months of telework, we have all grown and changed professionally and personally. This means that the culture of your office may be different than it was pre-pandemic. When returning to the office, prepare to be flexible as you rediscover your colleagues and experience a new office culture. Patience is key!

Many people have become accustomed to limited social interactions at work over the past two years. Most of us teleworked while others stayed on-site, but nearly everyone experienced altered or reduced contact with colleagues. On returning to the office, you may discover that your coworkers have a wide variety of preferences and comfort levels with in-person social interactions. Some may look forward to large gatherings while others may feel anxious about being indoors with their colleagues. Some may find meetings, group projects, and even chit chat to be overwhelming or exhausting at first, while others may look forward to the personal interaction. Communicating your preferences is important, as is respecting the preferences others communicate to you. It may be helpful to inform the colleagues with whom you work most closely if you have frequent contact with at-risk individuals so they understand the need for increased caution. Again, patience is central to navigate this transitional period. Over time, as we get used to being in the office again, you and your colleagues will acclimate to the new office dynamic.

DOE offers a wide variety of resources to assist you with issues which may arise during a return to the office. The ADR Office is available to help manage conflicts. DOE also has an Ombudsman program, Employee Assistance programs, a Reasonable Accommodations program, and more to help you transition smoothly. Check your local site for points of contact.



Below is a list of resources, both inside and outside of DOE, for managing conflicts and stress, as well as links to articles and videos covering return to office issues. We hope that these resources are helpful. Now more than ever, we're all in this together.

## DOE RESOURCES

### *Health and Wellness*

DOE has several fitness centers. Learn more at the following links:

[Forrestal Occupational Health Organization](#)

[Germantown Occupational Health Organization](#)

[Field Office Fitness Centers](#)

Your health insurance provider may also offer wellness services and/or discounts for such services.

### *DOE Programs*

#### *Reasonable Accommodations*

DOE is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to qualified employees and applicants with disabilities, consistent with all applicable laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines. *Please note that the following link is only available to those with DOE devices.*

[Reasonable Accommodations | Powerpedia](#)

#### *The Office of Economic Impact and Diversity*

The Office of Economic Impact and Diversity oversees DOE diversity and inclusion policies, goals, and operations; incorporates diversity into all of DOE's workplace initiatives; and coordinates employee resource groups.

[Office of Economic Impact and Diversity | Department of Energy](#)

#### *Employee Assistance Program*

DOE partners with Espȳr to provide Federal employees and their families with a comprehensive Employee Assistance Program with services and resources to support and enhance personal well-being and work-life balance including:

- Free, confidential, short-term counseling and coaching for personal, family, and work-related concerns;
- Management consultation regarding individual employee/workgroup situations;
- Workgroup grief counseling following traumatic events;
- Worklife and wellness programs;
- Referrals to worklife resources such as legal, financial, adoption, daily living, childcare, elder care, pet care information; and
- 24/7 toll-free access to mental health professionals.

All DOE Federal employees may contact Espȳr at (877) 801-5752 for counselors conveniently located near their work or home. Additionally, DOE Federal employees and managers in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area may contact the HQ EAP Specialist for counseling or consultative services: (202) 586-4995.

[Espȳr](#)

#### *Office of the Ombudsman*

The Office of the Ombudsman offers employees an opportunity to speak with a neutral, independent DOE official about workplace issues in a confidential environment. The team works to identify the root causes of workplace challenges and offers tailored approaches based on your needs and goals.

[Office of the Ombudsman | Department of Energy](#)



### *The Office of the Chief Information Officer*

The OCIO has compiled a guide with tools and tips about the IT resources you rely on to help make your transition to the workplace as smooth and successful as possible.

[OCIO Return to Workplace Guide \(Download\)](#)

For more resources, visit the [DOECares Powerpedia page](#).

## OTHER RESOURCES

### *American Psychological Association (APA) - Crisis Hotlines and Resources*

The APA has a list of specialists and resources available for confidential telephone counseling.

[American Psychological Association | Crisis Hotlines and Resources](#)

### *How Right Now*

This website, created by the Centers for Disease Control Foundation, focuses on emotional health and coping.

<https://howrightnow.org>

### *Mental Health First Aid*

This website, create by the National Counsel for Mental Wellbeing, teaches how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The link below shares tips for recognizing and working through stress, anxiety, and depression in the workplace.

[Mental Health First Aid | Stress, Anxiety, Depression: What it Looks Like at Work and How to Provide Support](#)

### *National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)*

There are 650 NAMI State Organizations and NAMI Affiliates across the country. Many NAMI affiliates offer an array of free support and education programs.

[NAMI | Find Support](#)

## ADRO ON-DEMAND PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the topics listed below, ADRO has a wide range of topics from which to choose on [energy.gov/adr](https://energy.gov/adr).

### *Positivity in the Workplace*

This session provides an introduction to positive psychology – the scientific study of happiness and well-being – and explores its role in the management of workplace conflict.

[ADR Lunchtime Series: Positivity in Workplace Conflict Management](#)

### *Employee Engagement - When a Human Being Shows Up Instead!*

This presentation includes an overview of the “What Motivates Me” Engagement Training, looks at how meetings affect employee engagement, and finishes with a discussion of additional ideas for employee engagement. For the those struggling with the social aspects of remote work, this can be a step back to connection.

[ADR Lunchtime Series: Employee Engagement - When a Human Being Shows Up Instead!](#)

### *Workplace Disruptions, Reorganizations, and 'Change Fatigue' – Can ADR Support Resilience?*

This workshop examines perspectives on crisis management, resilience, continuity, dealing with “change fatigue”, and learning to manage the unexpected.

[ADR Lunchtime Series: Workplace Disruptions, Reorganizations, and 'Change Fatigue' - Can ADR Support Resilience?](#)



### *The Synthesis of Conflict Management and Employee Engagement*

The presenters discuss the concepts of employee engagement and successful conflict management, and they share ideas on how these seemingly disparate concepts can be brought together to create a high-performing organization.

[ADR Lunchtime Series: Conflict Resolution Day - The Synthesis of Conflict Management and Employee Engagement](#)

## OTHER PRESENTATIONS

### *The Power of You to Truly Make Meetings Work*

Steven Rogelberg provides insight into how to make meetings efficient and how to eliminate bad meetings.

[The Power of You to Truly Make Meetings Work | TEDxUNCCharlotte](#)

### *Why There's So Much Conflict at Work and What You Can Do to Fix It*

Liz Kislik describes the underlying conditions that can lock people into unproductive conflict and shares five steps to enable people in any kind of organization identify the underpinnings of a conflict and work through it effectively.

[Why There's So Much Conflict at Work and What You Can Do to Fix It | Liz Kislik | TEDxBaylorSchool](#)

## CALENDAR

### FEBRUARY 3, 2022

- ADR Lunchtime Series: "Belonging in a Virtual Space" - In coordination with the federal interagency ADR working group (IADRWG), ADRO will be hosting Sara Huang via WebEx from noon to 1:30pm ET. Sara's ADR work focuses on facilitating group interactions. She will present on the concept of belonging and, more specifically, on what belonging means in the age of remote work.

## IDENTIFYING YOUR NEEDS TO MAKE CONFLICT RESOLUTION MORE EFFECTIVE

BY: KRISTIN L. MARTIN  
ADRO MEDIATOR  
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

Managing issues is always easier when all parties know what they want and why they want it. If parties enter into conflict resolution with a solution in mind but don't address the reason why the conflict arose, they risk running into the same issue again down the road. Many people find it helpful to spend time analyzing the root cause of their issue and identifying their unmet needs before meeting with the other parties.

Even issues that feel small can have roots in larger unmet needs. For instance, imagine a conflict between two colleagues who share an office. Colleague A loves to listen to the local Top 40 station through her computer speakers while working, but Colleague B does not like the situation and has requested Colleague A to stop on two occasions. Colleague B wants to be laidback, but her frustration has grown for months. She has decided to sit down with Colleague A to work out a solution. The obvious solution may seem to be that nobody listens to music in the office, but by knowing their needs in advance, the colleagues may be able to work out a solution that actually improves their mutual work experience.

#### 1. *Identify the underlying need.*

There may be multiple reasons why Colleague B has made her requests to stop the music. Maybe she finds music distracting. Maybe she doesn't care for Top 40 but would enjoy a different station. Maybe a client was



able to hear the music over the phone. A tailored solution may be easier for Colleague A to accommodate. However, there is an underlying unmet need that should be addressed before the colleagues implement their solution. Colleague B made two requests that she feels have been ignored. Her need—being treated with respect—is unmet because it appears that Colleague A does not value her requests.

2. *Clearly describe the need.*

Colleague B should consider discussing the issue of respect with Colleague A. Not only will Colleague A be more responsive to the music request if she understands the issue as one of respect, but she may be more responsive to similar requests in the future. When raising the issue of respect, it is essential to explain, not accuse. Colleague A will be less likely to be defensive or to disagree that her actions have a disrespectful impact when the intent of her actions is not questioned.

3. *Balance your needs with others' needs*

Once a need has been communicated, parties should work to balance their needs with those of the other parties. Not every need can be met every time, but discussions about partial solutions, as well as about the reasons why a need could not be met, demonstrate goodwill and trust. Returning to our example, Colleague A may not have realized that Colleague B wanted a permanent change to the music. In balancing their needs, Colleague B may learn how to ask things of Colleague A in a way that makes clear exactly what she wants.

Learning to identify and communicate needs is an essential part of the ADR Toolkit. People rarely act maliciously in the office. More often than not, the parties simply don't realize that they have crossed a boundary or left a colleague's need unmet. By making underlying needs known, the lessons learned in conflict management and resolution can be proactively applied to other situations, thereby reducing the potential for future conflict.



**ADRO  
IS HERE TO HELP**

**QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANGING OR UPDATED EXPECTATIONS?  
UNSURE HOW TO DISCUSS UNCERTAINTY WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR?  
TENSION WITH COLLEAGUES OVER NEW PROTOCOLS AND PRACTICES?  
NAVIGATING A NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE WORKPLACE?**

**Don't hesitate to reach out should any of these or other related issues arise. Some pre-pandemic issues are manifesting in a new context. Other issues might be new for all of us. Whatever the case, we'll get through it together.**



# ADRO



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*ADRO would also like to welcome its newest staff attorneys  
Wendy Bonilla and Jason Eliaser.*

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